

**Testimony of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Connecticut
Government Administration and Elections Committee**

February 25, 2013

**IN OPPOSITION TO
HB 5124 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL RECORDS AND
ACCESS TO RESTRICTED RECORDS IN THE STATE ARCHIVES**

Senator Musto, Representative Jutila and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, my name is Daniela Giordano and I am the Public Policy Director with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Connecticut. NAMI Connecticut is the state affiliate of NAMI, the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for all those affected by mental illness. NAMI Connecticut offers support groups, educational programs, and advocacy for improved services, more humane treatment and an end to stigma and economic and social discrimination. We represent individuals who live with mental illness and parents and family members of individuals living with mental illness. I am writing to you today on behalf of NAMI Connecticut to express grave concerns regarding raised H.B. 5124, *An Act Concerning the Preservation of Historical Records and Access to Restricted Records in the State Archives*.

We oppose the provision in Section 2(c) of this bill as it would break the confidentiality protections for individuals who happen to have been served in the public mental health system, fifty years after their death. As written, this bill would allow access to psychiatric records, including persons' identifying information, without an option of consent either by the individuals during their lifetime or by their family members prior to disclosure. The same kind of information pertaining to an individual who happen to have been served in the private system is protected and kept confidential into perpetuity. This makes this provision, very possibly unintentionally, a discriminatory practice toward people served in the public sector. Individuals, who could be (and are) ourselves, our family members, friends, neighbors and colleagues who find themselves needing to access state services deserve the same protection and trust in protecting sensitive information than their counterparts in the private system.

We see two possible solutions to this conflict. The more complete and more drastic option is to strike Section 2(c) completely from the bill, or, ensure that any identifying information, including individuals' names and birth dates, are redacted prior to making records publicly available, which would still serve the purpose of historical research.

Respectfully submitted,

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Public Policy Director
NAMI Connecticut